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MARON: A MYTHOLOGICAL STUDY¹

BY CHARLES B. NEWCOMER

In the ninth book of the *Odyssey* Homer makes Odysseus describe at some length that wonderful wine with which he subdued the Cyclops Polyphemus. It had such strength and sweetness that it was drunk mixed with twenty parts of water. Soon after setting out homeward from Troy, Odysseus and his men landed on the coast of Thrace and plundered the Ciconian city Ismarus (later called Maronea).² As a reward for sparing the shrine of Apollo, Odysseus received twelve jars of this wine from his priest Maron, Euanthes' son. Odysseus says *Od.* ix. 196 ff.:

ἀτὰρ αἶγεον ἄσκον ἔχον μέλανος οἶνοιο
ἦδεος, ὃν μοι ἔδωκε Μάρων Εὐάνθεος υἱός,
ἱρὸς ἐὺς Ἀπόλλωνος, ὃς Ἰσμαρον ἀμφιβεβήκειν.

The scholiasts thought it strange that Homer did not connect Dionysus, the wine-god, with this passage, which treats especially of wine, and that he did not make Maron the priest of Dionysus rather than of Apollo. This perplexity was caused, as I believe, by their misunderstanding the word *εὐανθής*, originally an epithet of Dionysus. Now, *εὐανθής*, "blooming," might easily become, with changed accent, *Εὐάνθης*, the "Blooming One," a fitting name for Dionysus, the god of vegetation. Athenaeus, quoting from Phanodemus, gives evidence in favor of this view. He says, xi. 465 a, that the Athenians *ἡσθέντες οὖν τῇ κράσει ἐν ᾧδαῖς ἔμελπον τὸν Διόνυσον, χορεύοντες καὶ ἀνακαλοῦντες εὐανθῇ καὶ διθύραμβον καὶ βακχευτὰν καὶ βρόμιον*. Here *εὐανθής* is manifestly an epithet of Dionysus.

But not all the ancients misunderstood the name "Euanthes." Euripides in the *Cyclops* makes Maron a son of Dionysus, following, as I think, the *Ὀδυσσῆς*, a lost drama of Cratinus. For Pollux vi. 26 says that Cratinus called wine "maron," quoting

¹ Read at the Classical Conference at Ann Arbor, Mich., March 30, 1906.

² Cf. Newcomer *De Cyclope* (Berlin, 1899), p. 20.

the following, which Bergk correctly ascribes to this play (Kock *C.A.F.*, Cratini 135): οὐπω ᾿πιον τοιοῦτον οὐδὲ πίομαι Μάρωνα. Here we must suppose the Cyclops acquainted with wine, but not such as Odysseus had doubtless just mentioned under the new name of "maron." Similarly in Homer the Cyclops calls the wine given him by Odysseus "a distillation of ambrosia and nectar" (*Od.* ix. 359). Since, therefore, the name "maron" can signify wine, it must have been associated in some way with Dionysus; as, e. g., the name of his son or priest. Cratinus then followed Homer; for this is in accord with Homer's very words, "Maron, son of Euanthes, priest of Apollo," if, as we contend, Euanthes is Dionysus.

But we have further testimony. Theophilus (*Ad Autolyceum* ii, p. 94) makes Satyrus call Maron the son of Ariadne and Dionysus. This in turn agrees with the scholium on *Od.* ix. 197: Μάρων Εὐάνθους υἱός, ὁ δὲ Εὐάνθης υἱὸς Διονύσου. Hesiod, too, seems to have associated Maron with Dionysus; for the scholiast on *Od.* ix. 198 says: ἡ δ' ἀπόστασις πρὸς Ἡσίοδον λέγοντα τὸν Μάρωνα εἶναι Οἰνοπίωνος τοῦ Διονύσου. Further, the scholiast on Apollonius Rhodius iii. 997 says that according to some both Euanthes and Oenopion were sons of Dionysus and Ariadne: καταλέλειπται γὰρ <ἡ Ἀριάδνη> ὑπὸ Θεσέως ἐν Νάξῳ· διαπεπαρθέενται δὲ ὑπὸ Διονύσου κατὰ τινάς, ἐξ ἧς παιδοποιεῖ Οἰνοπίωνα, Θόαντα, Στάφυλον, Λάτραμνν, Εὐάνθη, Ταυρόπολιν. From this series of old traditions we learn that Maron was the son or grandson of Dionysus.

But how might Maron, son of the wine-god, become priest of Apollo, the god of soothsaying, at this ancient shrine of Ismarus? Let us consider the association of Dionysus with Apollo at other shrines.

In Greek religion the gods were largely made after the image of the worshippers. While they were anthropomorphic, they were also superhuman—mightier than men, whom they might benefit or harm according to their pleasure. Men courted their goodwill and invoked their assistance, feared their wrath and sought to appease it. Thus many men of various needs and in various circumstances and places prayed to one god, who then came into

the possession of many attributes. Witness the numerous epithets and by-names applied to any popular divinity.

Apollo.—The attributes and characteristics of Apollo are especially manifold. He appears as sea-god, sky-god, and earth-god. The meaning of the word "Apollo" is uncertain; hence we get no light as to the origin of the god from its derivation. There is a tradition that sailors carried the worship of their protecting sea-god to Crisa and Delphi; cf. Preller-Robert *Griech. Myth.*, pp. 257 f. Possibly they came from Crete, where Apollo Delphinus was worshiped; *CIG.* 255. 4: ἐν Κνωσῷ ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ τῷ Ἀπόλλωνος τῷ Δελφινίῳ. At Delphi the cult of Apollo superseded that of the chthonic oracle god Pytho. Poetically expressed, Apollo slew the python. But as god of oracles he only expressed the will of Zeus, and that too through the priestess Pythia. Much missionary work was done from Delphi. Wherever the worship of Apollo was introduced into other parts of Greece, he was said to kill the native god or hero and take his place. But in each case he would assume some of the functions of the native god. Thus Apollo appears as the god of farming, vegetation, spring; of cattle-raising, the chase, growing youth; of the palaestra, strife, and battle; of oracles, oaths, treaties; of expiation, healing, as dispeller of all evil; of music, dancing; of death; of sea-faring, capes and mountains, colonization, commerce; of light, the sun.

Dionysus.—More is known of the origin of Dionysus. Kretschmer derives the name from Διὸς and νῦσος, the Thracian word for "son." See *Aus der Anomia*, pp. 22 f.; cf. νύσᾱ = νύμφη, κόρη, and Νύσαι, the "Maidens" on the Sophilos vase, *Ath. Mitth.*, XIV (1889), Taf. I; also the inscription Διὸς φῶς, "Zeus's man," "hero," applying to the child Dionysus on a black-figured vase, Minervini *Monum. Ined. de R. Barone*, tav. I. Semele, the reputed mother of Dionysus, as Kretschmer has shown (pp. 18–22), was a Phrygio-Thracian earth-nymph, whom the Greeks localized at Thebes. In fact, the word Σεμέλη means "earth;" cf. Slav. zemlja (in *Nova Zembla*, "New Earth"), Gk. χθών (χαμαί, χαμαλός), Lat. humus (*humilis*), "earth," homo (*humānus*), A.-S. and Goth. guma, "man."

There is manifold evidence that Dionysus came comparatively late into Greek religion, and that he immigrated from Thrace. He is pre-eminently a nature-god and, like Demeter and Cora, comes and goes with the seasons—has his epiphanies and recessions. Homer mentions Dionysus in but one passage, the Glaucus episode in the sixth book of the *Iliad*, considered by some critics as a late addition. Here he is not yet an Olympian, but may be frightened by the wrath of the mortal Lycurgus, and flees to Thetis for refuge. Later we find him represented among the Olympian gods—e. g., on the frieze of the Parthenon. Vase-painters of the sixth century B. C. picture his triumphal entry into the assembly of the Olympians; cf. Miss Harrison, *Prolegomena*, pp. 366 f.

The historians all ascribe to Dionysus a Thracian origin, while the poets—influenced, no doubt, by the patriotism and vanity of the Greeks, who were averse to acknowledging a barbarian origin for so popular a divinity—make him a native of Thebes who returns in triumph after wandering to the far East. Herodotus (v. 7) says of the Thracians: θεοὺς δὲ σέβονται μόνους τοῦσδε· Ἄρεα καὶ Διόνυσον καὶ Ἄρτεμιν. In another passage (viii. 111) he gives an account of a famous oracle shrine of Dionysus situated upon the mountain heights of the unconquered Satrae. The priests were chosen from the tribe called Bessi. As at Delphi, it was a priestess that pronounced the oracles. Since this people remained unconquered for hundreds of years, we may believe that Dionysus was their native god. His oracle, which remained famous till Roman times, is referred to by Euripides in *Hecuba* 1267: ὁ Θρηξὶ μάντις εἶπε Διόνυσος τάδε.

Pausanias (ix. 30. 9) says that the people of Libethra, a city on the Macedonian side of Mount Olympus, received an oracle sent from Dionysus in Thrace. This must be the famous Thracian Dionysus just considered. Amphiclea was an ancient city lying to the north of Mount Parnassus. In x. 33. 11 Pausanias tells of an oracle shrine situated there, πρόμαντις δὲ ὁ ἱερεὺς ἐστὶ, χρᾶ δὲ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ κάτοχος. The fact should be noted that Dionysus advances southward upon Grecian territory, and that he still preserves his prophetic gift. We find him next on

Mount Parnassus sharing with his brother Apollo the temple at Delphi.

The worship of Dionysus greatly fascinated the Greek mind, and soon spread over all Greece. The ruins of theaters in every considerable Greek city are witness to the spread of his religion; for the performances of dramas in his honor were acts of public worship. In Attica Dionysus was more especially the god of intoxicating wine and the accompanying joys; while in the Delphic cult-myth he was still considered rather as a nature-god, the god of vegetation and animal life; and as such he died and had to be called back to life every second year by the thyads. Pausanias says (x. 4. 3): αἱ δὲ θυιάδες γυναῖκες μὲν εἰσιν Ἀττικαί, φοιτῶσαι δὲ ἐς τὸν Παρνασσὸν παρὰ ἔτος αὐταί τε καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες Δελφῶν ἄγουσιν ὄργια Διονύσῳ. And again (x. 32. 7): καὶ αἱ θυιάδες ἐπὶ τούτοις <τοῖς ἄκροις τοῦ Παρνασοῦ> τῷ Διονύσῳ καὶ τῷ Ἀπόλλωνι μαίνονται. Note the words "rave in honor of Dionysus and Apollo." The worship of Apollo is not only partly superseded by that of Dionysus, but is contaminated as well.

At Delphi the three winter months (*Dadophorius*, *Poetropius*, *Amalios*) were sacred to Dionysus. During this time Apollo was said to be banished among the Hyperboreans, and the Delphians invoked Dionysus back to life, especially under the name Zagreus. Cf. Plutarch *De ei apud Delphos* 9:

<Διόνυσος> ᾧ τῶν Δελφῶν οὐδὲν ἦττον ἢ τῷ Ἀπόλλωνι μέτεστιν. . . . Διόνυσον δὲ καὶ Ζαγρέα καὶ Νυκτέλιον καὶ Ἴσοδαίτην αὐτὸν ὀνομάζουσι καὶ φθοράς τινας καὶ ἀφανισμοὺς καὶ τὰς ἀποβιώσεις καὶ παλιγγενεσίας οἰκεῖα ταῖς εἰρημέναις μεταβολαῖς αἰνίσματα καὶ μυθεύματα περαίνουσι.

During the rest of the year they sang paeans to Apollo at their sacred festivals. Recent excavations at Delphi have brought to light an inscription containing a paeon to Dionysus. This is further evidence that the conception of the two gods was confused. See Weil *Bull. corr. hel.* XIX (1895), p. 398. Dionysus then was the vicar of Apollo, and, as Plutarch says, had no less interest in Delphi than Apollo himself. The grave of Dionysus was shown at the omphalus in the cella of the temple, where the priests brought secret offerings about the time of the winter

solstice, when the thyads raise up Licnites (the babe Dionysus); cf. Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 35 (p. 365 *a*); Philochor. *frag.* 22:

ἔστιν ἰδεῖν τὴν ταφὴν αὐτοῦ ἐν Δελφοῖς παρὰ τὸν Ἀπόλλωνα τὸν χρυσοῦν. βάθρον δέ τι εἶναι ὑπονοεῖται ἢ σορός, ἐν ᾧ γράφεται· Ἐνθάδε κείται θανὼν Διόνυσος ὁ ἐκ Σεμέλης.

On the east pediment of the Apollo temple at Delphi, Apollo and the muses were represented; on the west, Dionysus with the thyads. On a vase in the St. Petersburg Hermitage Museum (*Cat.* 1807), Apollo and Dionysus are represented shaking hands in front of a palm tree, surrounded by Bacchic worshipers, and with a filleted omphalos in the foreground. This represents a brotherly meeting of the two gods—perhaps Dionysus welcoming Apollo upon his biennial return; see Helbig *Archaeolog. Zeit.* XXIV (1866), pp. 185 f., with Pl. 211. In the Athenian festival known as the City Dionysia the lyric preceded the dramatic performance. The victorious choregi of lyric choruses received a tripod. These facts show reminiscences of an older Apollo cult.

The relationship of Dionysus to Apollo at Delos was on a similar footing. Hauvette-Besnault *Bull. corr. hel.* VII (1883), pp. 103 ff., gives ten choregic inscriptions from Delos, all of similar formula, being a record of the annual religious festival. In each case after the date, given by the archon's name, and the words *ὑγίεια καὶ εὐετηρία ἐγένετο* ("there has been good health and a prosperous year"), there follow: *οἷδε ἐχορήγησαν εἰς Ἀπολλώνια* (names of choregi); *εἰς Διονύσια* (names of a chorus of boys); and finally, *οἷδε ἐπεδειξάντο τῷ θεῷ* (names of actors, musicians, and other performers). It is to be noted that here again the Apollonia, always mentioned first, correspond to the older lyric portion of the Athenian state festival, and the Dionysia to the later dramatic portion.

An inscription (*IG.* II. 570) giving an account of disbursements of the Attic deme Plothea contains the items: "for the *Apollonia* 1,100 drachmas, for the *Pandia* 600 drachmas." The *Pandia* at Athens were the last act in the City Dionysia; Mommsen *Feste d. Stadt Athen*, p. 433, n. 1. If the same may be inferred for Plothea, we have here again the same order of

development as at Athens: first the lyric, then the dramatic part of the celebration.

Phlya was a rich Attic deme situated some five miles northeast of Athens in a fertile district capable of supporting a large population. This was the birthplace of Euripides, and, I think, the home of the old Attic family of the Lycomids, who performed mystic rites here. The orgies of the Great Goddess, Earth, with Bacchic mysteries, were said to have been celebrated here even before the mysteries were instituted at Eleusis. Here were altars and temples of many gods and goddesses. Pausanias (i. 31. 4) mentions altars of "Flowery" ("Ἀνθιος) Dionysus and of "Dionysus-given" (Διονυσόδοτος) Apollo. This Apollo has been identified with the "Laureled" (Δαφνηφόρος) Apollo at Phlya mentioned by other writers; cf. Plut. *Them.* 15; Herod. viii. 11. Just what relationship this Dionysus-given Apollo had to Dionysus himself may not be evident, but the epithet proves some association of the two gods.

The Homeric instance of the union of Dionysus and Apollo is too early either to explain their connection in Greece or to be explained as the result of missionary influence from Delphi. For Rohde (*Psyche*, pp. 295 ff.) gives much ancient testimony and cogent arguments showing how the orgiastic worship of the Thracian god was introduced comparatively late into Greece; and how it contaminated the cult of Apollo.

But at Ismarus it is not at once evident which god first possessed the shrine. If Ismarus was originally a Greek colony with pure Apollo-worship, Dionysus doubtless won his claims as he did later in Greece. But if Dionysus was the original possessor of the shrine at Ismarus, the Apollo-worship must have been introduced by Greeks. This might have been a slow and peaceful conquest, a matter of education. If so, the partisans of Dionysus had sufficient influence to retain their priest Maron, the reputed son or grandson of Dionysus (Euanthes), while Apollo became the god of both parties.

But conquest also might bring about a similar result; for conquerors often reverently spared the shrines of peoples they subjugated. Thus Apollo, the god of the victorious invaders,

might take up his abode in the old Dionysus temple, retaining the old servants and even the priest. At any rate, such a custom prevailed in the middle of the fifth century B. C., for the Athenian decree establishing a colony at Brea in Thrace expressly commands the colonists: τὰ δὲ τεμένη τὰ ἐξηρημένα ἐὰν καθάπερ ἔστι, καὶ ἄλλα μὴ τεμενίζειν; *IG.* I. 31; Hicks² 41; Dittenberger² 19; Roberts-Gardner *Inscriptions of Attica* 8.

We have seen that Apollo and Dionysus were brothers, and as such possessed many attributes in common. They might share a common temple or receive the homage of the same worshipers at religious functions. The shrine at Ismarus presents us the most ancient instance of their union.

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